



Media Advisory

US Army Corps of Engineers®

Mississippi Valley Division/
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Release #: 02-01
For Release: January 3, 2002

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(Note to Editors: The following provides information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' disaster response mission within the Mississippi Valley Division.)

Disaster response in the Mississippi Valley Division

Vicksburg, Miss., January 3, 2002 -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, has been of service to the Mississippi valley for more than 175 years. The Mississippi Valley Division has responded during times of need with engineering, construction as well as water resources expertise. Due to first-hand knowledge of the conditions within the Mississippi valley, the Mississippi Valley Division is able to play a major role in saving lives and easing human suffering when disasters occur.

The Mississippi Valley Division includes portions of 12 states and encompasses 370,000 square miles. The [Mississippi Valley Division](#) includes six district offices, which are responsible for conducting programs and activities and are located in St. Paul, Minn.; Rock Island, Ill.; St. Louis, Mo.; Memphis, Tenn.; Vicksburg, Miss.; and New Orleans, La.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a major Army command with a broad set of missions and capabilities. One of its missions is to provide assistance, within its authorities, when natural disasters or other emergencies occur.

Emergency preparedness and response is primarily a state and local responsibility. However, in instances when the nature of the disaster exceeds the capabilities of state and local interests, the Mississippi Valley Division may provide help to save human life, prevent immediate human suffering or relieve property damage.

2-2-2 DISASTER RESPONSE

The Mississippi Valley Division identifies emergency assistance as a top priority and provides immediate response using every available resource and expedited procedure. Assistance under Corps authorities for floods or coastal storms is limited to the preservation of life and protection of residential and commercial developments, to include public and private facilities that provide public services. Exclusive assistance to individual homeowners and businesses, including agricultural businesses, is not authorized. During periods of extreme drought, there is limited authority under certain statutory conditions to construct wells and to transport water to farmers, ranchers and political subdivisions. Rehabilitation assistance may also be available for eligible flood control structures. There are requirements that rehabilitation efforts are economically justified. Construction of temporary flood control works upon verification of an imminent threat of flooding may also be accomplished.

In addition to emergency authorities, the Mississippi Valley Division also has a primary role in support of the Federal Response Plan. The Plan describes the basic structure by which the federal government will mobilize resources and conduct response/recovery activities to assist states and local governments in coping with the consequences of significant natural and/or man-made disasters, to include terrorist events.

Within this Plan, the Department of Defense has designated the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the primary agency for planning, preparedness and response under the Emergency Support Function (ESF #3), Public Works, and Engineering. The type of assistance provided by ESF #3 includes:

- Technical assistance
- Provision of emergency supplies of potable ice and water
- Provision of temporary, emergency electrical power
- Debris clearance, removal and disposal
- Provision of emergency access to include clearing of streets and bridging
- Provision of temporary emergency housing

Some of the activities within the scope of ESF #3 include emergency clearance of debris, restoration of critical public services and facilities, including supply of adequate amounts of potable water, temporary restoration of water supply systems, technical assistance, structural evaluation of buildings and damage assessment.

3-3-3 DISASTER RESPONSE

The Mississippi Valley Division is responsible for emergency preparedness and developing plans for all hazards response. In addition, each district has a specific primary mission assignment for execution in support of FEMA under the Federal Response Plan. These missions are executed by a Planning and Response Team trained specifically for the assigned mission. These teams may respond within the Mississippi Valley Division, or may be deployed anywhere worldwide.

Some of the districts' unique challenges, as well as capabilities, include:

St. Paul District

A major challenge this year for the St. Paul District was the 2001 spring flood. This flood event challenged the capability of federal, state and local flood fighters to sustain an effective response posture through multiple flood peaks.

The Red River of the North and the Minnesota River basins reached major flood levels, and the potential of near-record flooding created a strenuous demand on all response teams. Additionally, Mississippi River levels neared the flood of record at several locations.

More than 125 Corps personnel participated in field operations. The St. Paul District provided over 3.3 million sandbags, loaned over 84 flood pumps and constructed approximately 20 miles of emergency levees at 10 communities within the three impacted river basins. The emergency operations effort required \$4.7 million and prevented more than \$15 million in damages.

Permanent projects already in place prevented another \$423 million in flood damages. The Corps of Engineers emergency activities and permanent projects prevented a total of approximately \$451 million in flood damages.

See the [St. Paul District Disaster Response homepage](#) for more information and [flood photos](#).

4-4-4 DISASTER RESPONSE

St. Louis District

Five structural engineers from the St. Louis District, all trained in urban search and rescue operations, were among the first experts from the Corps requested and deployed to aid at the World Trade Center following the September 11, 2001, attacks. The team was responsible for making structural safety assessments of buildings and debris to ensure the safety of rescue workers. [Click here to read their story.](#)

Members of this search and rescue team also played a prominent role in rescue efforts following the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995.

The St. Louis District is also home to one of six Corps [Rapid Response Vehicles](#) (RRV) -- vehicles packed with the equipment necessary to put a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' disaster response team into action at any emergency site nationwide within 18 hours or less.

The RRV is part of the Deployable Tactical Operations System (DTOS), which provides Corps Planning and Response Teams immediate office space, and communications and information management support while dealing with the chaos of a disaster response. An RRV can accommodate a staff of seven people or more. Its equipment includes laptop computers, office software, global position system equipment, digital cameras, phone and intercom system, satellite communications, cellular phone, radios, drafting and mapping software and wireless capability to network laptops within 200 feet of the RRV.

For more information, see the [St. Louis District Emergency Response homepage](#).

Memphis District

Mindful of its location in the active New Madrid Seismic Zone, the Memphis District has established an earthquake center of expertise that works closely with the Central United States Earthquake Consortium, headquartered in Memphis. In the event of a significant seismic event in the central United States, plans developed by the Memphis District would play a key role in response/recovery activities. The District also has a partnering relationship with the Center for River Studies at the University of Memphis that focuses on reducing flooding in the Mid-South Region.

5-5-5 DISASTER RESPONSE

For all disasters, natural and man-made, the Memphis District works closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to coordinate power restoration when tasked and funded to do so by FEMA as part of Emergency Support Function 3 (ESF 3). Memphis District's Emergency Power Planning and Response Team works with FEMA and state and local officials to prioritize and coordinate the restoration of power to customers whenever crises arise.

With the help of the 249th Engineer Battalion, headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Va., (known as the *Prime Power Battalion*), a list of critical facilities is developed and then prioritized for installation of temporary, emergency power. *Prime Power* also determines the minimum power needed by those customers. As a result, when FEMA declares an emergency, and electrical power is involved, a plan is already in place to determine who gets power first and how much they need.

For more information, access the [Memphis District Readiness Branch homepage](#).

Vicksburg District

Flooding was also an issue in the Vicksburg District during 2001. Heavy rains from December 2000 through February 2001 caused high-water levels on the Red River and Red Chute Bayou near Shreveport, La. Water levels overtopped the Red Chute Bayou Levee eroding the levee crown in several locations. Bank caving on the East Point Levee and Campiti-Clarence/Saline Bayou Levee threatened the levee in three locations. The district formed a team consisting of Engineering Division; Contracting Division; Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division and Operations Division personnel to assist with rehabilitation efforts.

The Vicksburg District was also involved in several other emergency operations during the year:

Hurricane Allison (Houston, Texas). Following Hurricane Allison in July, the district provided personnel support to the Galveston District to assist in the Debris and Temporary Housing missions.

West Virginia Flood. The district provided personnel to assist in the Temporary Housing mission for the West Virginia Flood of 2001.

Sept. 11, 2001, Terrorist Attack. The Emergency Operations Center provided personnel to work at FEMA headquarters for 30 days with the Emergency Support Team. In addition, as a result of the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, the district's Emergency Operations Center has been involved in Threat Assessments for all the district's critical infrastructure and office facilities.

6-6-6 DISASTER RESPONSE

For more information, visit the [Vicksburg District homepage](#).

New Orleans District

In support of the Corps' emergency mission, during the past year members of the New Orleans District's Emergency Response Team deployed to other Corps districts impacted by natural disasters, as well as the terrorist act on the World Trade Center.

Two team members were deployed to Houston, Texas, in response to Hurricane Allison. While there, they obtained environmental compliances and hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste clearance for properties selected for relocation of flood victims.

Eleven team members were deployed to West Virginia following the July flood disaster to assist in the Debris and Demolition missions. Primary duties of the team included coordination of efforts with local government, state, FEMA and other Emergency Support Functions, managing all taskings for demolition of flood-damaged residences and subsequent removal of debris, and the scheduling, tracking of funds, and estimating and reporting of all costs.

Five team members deployed to New York City following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. They worked in support of FEMA and the city government. Some were drivers, who were the first to be deployed in order to set up DTOC command posts near ground zero. They also helped with structural inspection, provided technical assistance associated with the debris management mission, command and communications setup and numerous other duties.

For more information, see the [New Orleans District Readiness and Emergency Operations homepage](#), as well as the district's [Hurricane and Emergency Information page](#).

Additional Links

[Emergency Operations Pamphlet](#): Overview of the Corps' Emergency Operations program and the types of assistance it offers.

[US Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Response System](#): The Corps' role in responding to federally declared disasters and emergencies.

249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power): The 249th generates and distributes prime electrical power in support of war fighting, disaster relief, stability and support operations as well as provides advice and technical assistance in all aspects of electrical power and distribution systems.